

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6253

INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN

AMCONSUL BREMEN

AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF

AMCONSUL FRANKFURT

AMCONSUL HAMBURG

AMCONSUL MUNICH

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

USMISSION USBERLIN

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR GW GE WB PINT

SUBJECT: GERMAN YOUTH COUNCIL MEETS THE "FREE" GERMAN
YOUTH

BEGIN SUMMARY. ACCORDING TO ERIK BETTERMANN, SECRETARY
GENERAL OF THE GERMAN YOUTH COUNCIL, THE DISCUSSIONS
HELD LAST WEEK IN EAST BERLIN BETWEEN HIS ORGANIZATION
AND THE FDJ (FREE GERMAN YOUTH) MARKED A
ROUGH FIRST STEP IN THE REESTABLISHMENT OF
CONTACTS BETWEEN THE PRINCIPAL YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS IN
THE FRG AND THE GDR. THE IMPRESSION LEFT ON ALL TEN
YOUTH COUNCIL PARTICIPANTS IN THE INFORMAL TALKS WAS
THAT THE FDJ WILL PROVE TO BE AN EVEN MORE DIFFICULT
"GESPRACHSPARTNER" THAN ITS RUSSIAN COUNTERPART.
END SUMMARY.

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1. IT WAS INTERESTING, BETTERMANN COMMENTED, THAT THE

FDJ HAD PARTICIPATED IN THE 1948 FOUNDING OF THE YOUTH COUNCIL, DESPITE THE EXISTING BERLIN BLOCKADE. IN 1949 HOWEVER, WITH THE FOUNDATION OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC, THE FDJ TERMINATED ITS MEMBERSHIP. UNTIL LAST WEEK'S MEETING, THERE HAD BEEN NO FURTHER CONTACT BETWEEN THE TWO GROUPS.

2. BETTERMANN SAID THAT IT WAS DIFFICULT TO HAVE AN INTELLIGENT DISCUSSION WITH THE FDJ REPRESENTATIVES. THEY REFUSED TO ADMIT THAT ANYTHING COULD BE IMPROVED IN THEIR SOCIETY AND INSISTED THAT EVERYTHING WAS BY DEFINITION BETTER IN THE GDR. "EVEN THE SKY IS BLUER," ACCORDING TO THE FDJ.

3. EVERYTHING FROM EDUCATIONAL REFORM TO DISARMAMENT WAS DISCUSSED IN THE TALKS, ACCORDING TO BETTERMANN. WHEN HE TRIED TO RELATE THE SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE FRG AND THE US TO THAT BETWEEN THE GDR AND THE USSR, HE WAS SHOUTED DOWN BY THE FDJ DELEGATES. THEY INSISTED THAT THE GDR IS COMPLETELY AUTONOMOUS, WHILE THE FRG IS A LACKEY OF THE U.S.

4. THE MOST PAINFUL PART OF THE MEETING OCCURRED, ACCORDING TO BETTERMANN, WHEN THE PARTICIPANTS MADE A SIDE VISIT TO THE FORMER CONCENTRATION CAMP AT SACHSEN-HAUSEN. THERE THE FDJ MEMBERS MAINTAINED THAT THE FRG, AND NOT THE GDR, HAS INHERITED THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR NAZI CRIMES. AS IF THIS WAS NOT BAD ENOUGH, BETTERMANN SAID, THERE WAS A HUGE BANNER AT THE END OF A SPECIAL ANTI-NAZI EXHIBITION IN THE CONCENTRATION CAMP WHICH PROCLAIMED THE FRG TO BE THE INHERITOR OF THE FASCIST POLICIES OF THE THIRD REICH. WHEN THE YOUTH COUNCIL DELEGATES PROTESTED AGAINST THIS "REJECTION OF THE SPIRIT OF HELSINKI," THEIR FDJ HOSTS ADMITTED THE BANNER PERHAPS DID OVERSTATE THE MESSAGE.

5. ONE BRIGHT SPOT ABOUT THESE INITIAL TALKS, ACCORDING TO BETTERMANN, WAS THE WILLINGNESS OF THE FDJ TO ACCEPT A WEST BERLINER IN THE YOUTH COUNCIL DELEGATION. BETTERMANN STRESSED THAT THIS WAS, IN ANY EVENT, A SINE QUA NON FOR HIM, SINCE SUCH PARTICIPATION BY WEST BERLIN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IN YOUTH COUNCIL ACTIVITIES SIMPLY CANNOT BE QUESTIONED. NO DIFFERENTIATION CAN BE MADE.

6. DESPITE THE COOL ATMOSPHERE PREVALENT IN THE FIRST ROUND, BETTERMANN BELIEVES THAT SUCH AN INFORMAL EXCHANGE OF VIEWS BETWEEN THE TWO GERMAN YOUTH CAMPS IS USEFUL AND WILL CONTINUE.
CASH

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